

Hillsman Out as 1st Casualty in Hunt for Viet Nam Solution

By GEORGE SHERMAN

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Robert Hillsman is the first casualty of the search within the Johnson administration for new ways to win the war in Viet Nam although officials insist his resignation did not come as a result of policy differences.

Mr. Hillsman's resignation as Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs came only one day after the State Department revealed that a new inter-departmental task force has been set up to "sharpen the focus of handling Viet Nameese problems."

Officials had made it clear that the new group would bypass Mr. Hillsman, who was the key State Department adviser on Viet Nam inherited from the Kennedy administration.

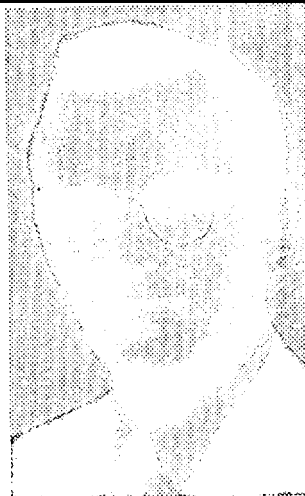
The task force was put under the command of William H. Sullivan, an assistant to Undersecretary for Political Affairs Averell Harriman, who now becomes a special assistant with direct access to Secretary of State Rusk.

Johnson Voices Regret

In a "Dear Roger" letter last night, President Johnson said he accepted Mr. Hillsman's resignation with great regret.

"You have served since the beginning of President Kennedy's administration with great courage and dedication in posts of the most difficult and demanding sort, but I recognize with reluctance your need to return to your chosen profession," Mr. Johnson said.

Mr. Hillsman wrote the President that he wanted to return



ROGER HILSMAN

—AP Wirephoto

to teaching, and that he has been approached recently by several universities. He said he had accepted a university offer in 1961, "but subsequently agreed to stay in Washington for a while longer at President Kennedy's personal request."

"There is no man in America who is better fitted for leadership than you," Mr. Hillsman told the President. "President Kennedy would have been proud — as are all of us who worked with him — of the vigor and sureness with which you have managed affairs."

Policy Relation Denied

Today officials are taking great pains to show that Mr. Hillsman's departure is not related to any difference over policy issues. Mr. Hillsman has long been associated with the decision of the Kennedy administration to support with arms and advisers all-out counter-guerrilla warfare against Communist infiltrators in South Viet Nam.

Although he is a firm advocate of the line that the war in Viet Nam must first be won in the south — by stabilizing the

military and political situation there — he was not opposed to current surveys looking toward opening a limited "second front" against the North Viet Nam base of the Communist guerrillas.

He has had some disagreements with the Pentagon, but they are said to have been more due to personality differences than differences over policy. He describes these differences as normal ones that occur as policy is developed.

Served With Merrill

During World War II Mr. Hillsman served with Merrill's Marauders in Burma and with the Office of Strategic Services, the forerunner of the Central Intelligence Agency, as a guerrilla leader.

The 44-year-old official returned to Government service after the Korean war broke out in 1950, and then served as director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research in the State Department before becoming overseer of Far Eastern policy in March, 1963. He formerly taught at Princeton University.

The job of Mr. Sullivan's new task force, according to State Department officials, is to work full time and at the highest level to develop any changes in the limping war effort in Viet Nam.

Besides top ranking representatives from the Defense Department, the State Department, the Agency for International Development and the Central Intelligence Agency, the group includes a ranking representative from the Joint Chiefs of Staff sitting in at the State Department.

Defending Mr. Sullivan's appointment yesterday, Mr. Harriman said that his job would be to see that policies

"are developed for the approval of President Johnson and when they are adopted to see that they are carried out."

Irish Quality Advanced

In a possible subtle comparison with Mr. Hillsman, Mr. Harriman described Mr. Sullivan as a young man "who has the Irish quality of understanding the other fellow's point of view."

Like Secretary of State Rusk and other top officials, Mr. Harriman also described as "cockeyed" the idea to neutralize South Viet Nam.

"North Viet Nam has announced it will not be neutralized and that means that South Viet Nam would be turned over to the Communists if it were . . . neutralized," he said.

President Johnson held discussions over the telephone yesterday with Secretary of Defense McNamara about his forthcoming inspection tour of South Viet Nam. The trip is now scheduled for soon after the middle of next week.

Officials indicate that this trip will be the key to any impending changes decided upon in the conduct of the Viet Nameese war. William Bundy, Mr. McNamara's Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs, is the top-ranking Pentagon member of Mr. Sullivan's new Viet Nam task force.